

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

Report of The Operational Improvement Board

To: ARP Joint Committee, 26th September 2017

Subject: Joint Committee Quoracy

Purpose: To recommend changes to then number of members required at Joint Committee to achieve a quorate meeting

Recommendation(s):

- That the number of members required for Joint Committee meetings to be quorate is reduced to five out of the seven members

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 ARP started its operation as a Joint Committee of two authorities, Breckland and Forest Heath district councils. This was in 2003. The Joint Committee was established with two members from each council, making a total committee of four. Each council had two substitutes.
- 1.1.2 In 2007 East Cambridgeshire District council joined ARP, initially through a contracting arrangement, but subsequently as full members of the Joint Committee. This took the committee to three authorities with six members.
- 1.1.3 In 2011 St Edmundsbury Borough council joined ARP as a full member, followed by Fenland, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney district councils in 2014. This took the total membership to seven authorities, represented by 14 members.
- 1.1.4 At the ARP Joint Committee on 13 March 2014, members tasked the Operational Improvement Board to look at the implications of the partnership expanding in terms of the size of the Joint Committee. A report was taken to 30 June 2014 Joint Committee (agenda item 11) setting out the options, which were:
- Move to a single member per authority immediately
 - Move to a single member per authority if and when Waveney and Suffolk Coastal become full members
 - Do nothing and continue with two members per authority.
- 1.1.5 At the meeting, discussion centred around whether it was the right time to change the number of members on the Joint Committee, in light of the imminent joining the partnership by Suffolk Coastal and Waveney, and also the unresolved issue of the future structure of ARP (which was part of the wider strategic review work). It was agreed to continue with two members per authority until the decision on the review of ARP had been made.
- 1.1.6 At its meeting on 19 March 2015 (agenda item 14) the committee agreed that it would continue operating under the existing Joint Committee model and that the partnership would be closed to any new full partners for the time being, but would look to trading possibilities, and using the partnership's strong reputation to secure future business

opportunities to the benefit of the existing seven partners, using a 'reinvigorated' Anglia Revenues Partnership trading company.

- 1.1.7 It was recognised that the Joint Committee had worked very effectively since the inception of ARP. However, as the partnership expanded, both in terms of membership and activities, and in light of the potentially significant changes relating to the implementation of Universal Credit, it was understood that the committee will need to become more nimble, be able to meet at shorter notice, and be able to respond more quickly to events. Latterly if a joint committee meeting had to be rearranged it had proved extremely difficult to get a date which was suitable for everyone.
- 1.1.8 There was significant evidence that a board of ten or more creates coordination and communication issues which had a negative effect on performance. The Joint Committee itself realised that we had passed the optimum number of members and asked officers to review the position for a second time.
- 1.1.9 At its meeting on the 17th September 2015 the Joint Committee agree to move to a single member representing each Council on the Joint Committee. It was also agreed that two substitutes would also be nominated by each Council.

2.0 Joint Committee current and possible arrangements

2.1 Current arrangements.

- 2.1.1 The recommendation agreed by the Joint Committee on the 26th September 2015 was as follows:

“RECOMMEND to the seven Councils that the Joint Committee moved to a single member and Two Substitutes per authority, with the option for one of the substitutes to attend and take part in debate (but not vote).”

- 2.1.2 Meetings have been held with one member per Authority from December 2015 and initially the arrangement work extremely well however, more recently, on two occasions, meetings have had to be cancelled because a member and nominated substitutes were unable to attend.
- 2.1.3 The Joint Committee meetings arranged for December 2016 was rearranged and the June 2017 meeting was cancelled with members receiving very little notice that the Committee could not proceed because it would not be quorate.

2.2 Future arrangements

- 2.2.1 The Operational Improvement Board have discussed the need to avoid cancelling ARP Joint Committees and felt that it would be useful to consider how we can ensure that future meetings are quorate
- 2.2.2 There are very many circumstances that can lead to members being unable to attend meetings and where these circumstances arise with little or no warning substitutes may also be unable to attend.
- 2.2.3 Where there are critical decisions or opportunities that require Joint Committee approval, there may be detrimental consequences if the meetings are delayed or cancelled

2.3 Options

- 2.3.1 The Joint Committee could continue with the current arrangement where there may be delays in decision making that may lead to opportunities being lost.
- 2.3.2 Substitutes could be asked to keep the Joint Committee dates in their calendars so that they will be available even at short notice.

2.3.3 Members could agree to reduce the number of members from Councils needed for a Joint Committee to be quorate

3.0 Reasons for recommendations

4.1 Where opportunities arise or critical decisions must be made in respect of service provision, the ARP could need to make decisions quickly

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Risk

5.1.1 If the decision making process is not certain then, income could be lost or, service delivery could reduce for customers.

5.1.2 If the number of members needed for Joint Committee to be quorate is reduced then decisions may be made against the wishes of members not present.

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 If the decision making process is not quick enough then we could see loss of income or, penalties in respect of statutory requirements.

5.3 Legal

If members approve the recommendation then each council would separately have to approve the change to the Anglia Revenues Partnership agreement.

5.4 Equality and Diversity

Not applicable.

Background papers:- None

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